

# Watergate Probe To Hear McCord

Post 3/28/73

The Senate's Watergate investigating committee will meet today in a closed-door session to take sworn testimony from convicted bugging conspirator James W. McCord Jr.

Sen. Howard H. Baker (R-Tenn.), the ranking minority member of the Senate select committee, said McCord's secret testimony would be followed within "a matter of weeks" by public hearings.

Sen. Sam J. Ervin (D-N.C.), the chairman of the seven-member committee, said McCord has been called to a private session because "I've always been of the conviction that you ought not to put a man in a public chair unless you know what he's going to say."

According to reliable Senate sources, McCord has named two presidential assistants as having had advance knowledge of the bugging of the Democratic headquarters at the Watergate last June 17. McCord named presidential counsel John W. Dean III and former White House aide Jeb Stuart Magruder in confidential sessions with the committee's chief counsel, the sources said.

Meanwhile, another Watergate conspirator, E. Howard Hunt Jr., yesterday appeared before the federal grand jury, which has reopened its probe. It could not be learned if Hunt is cooperating with the government. He is scheduled to reappear before the grand jury again today.

The arrangements for today's meeting were made hastily yesterday, in response to a request by McCord that he no longer be questioned. See WATERGATE, A10, Col. 1

## WATERGATE, From A1

in private by the committee staff and instead be put under oath immediately and questioned by members of the Senate.

McCord met Monday night with the committee's two top staff aides, Samuel Dash and Fred Thompson, and requested that such sworn testimony be taken either privately by Ervin or by all seven committee members, in either a public or private session.

One source said that McCord accused Dash of leaking



**JAMES McCORD**  
... anxious to testify

information that McCord had provided confidentially to him on Friday and Saturday. Two other sources disputed this and said McCord was not angry about the leaks but wanted to expedite his testimony.

Five of the seven Watergate committee members voted for a closed-door session with McCord, according to reliable sources. Sen. Joseph M. Montoya (D-N. Mex.) abstained and Sen. Lowell P. Weicker (R-Conn.) voted against the session because he wanted it to be public, the sources said.

Today's session will begin at 1:30 p.m. with Baker presiding. Ervin will be out of town because of the death of a brother.

Baker said yesterday that it was "in everybody's best interest" to expedite McCord's testimony. He said committee members would ask McCord questions that "range over a wide spectrum," apparently covering allegations of a broader campaign of political espionage and sabotage in addition to the Watergate bugging.

Both Democratic and Republican senators on the Watergate committee have expressed concern over McCord's testimony being publicized and apparently feel strongly that the matter must be aired as soon as possible to give Dean and Magruder an opportunity to respond.

Both Dean and Magruder have denied any advance knowledge or involvement in the Watergate bugging. President Nixon last summer had Dean conduct an internal White House investigation of the Watergate bugging, and

in August the President said that investigation cleared any "presently employed" White House aides of involvement.

On Monday, after McCord's allegations appeared in the Los Angeles Times, the President telephoned Dean and expressed "absolute and total confidence" in him.

McCord is scheduled to appear in another private session on Thursday with U.S. District Chief Judge John J. Sirica, who presided at the Watergate trial in January when McCord and six others stood trial.

Attention in the Senate and Justice Department probes of the Watergate has focused on McCord since his letter to Judge Sirica was read in open court Friday. In the letter, McCord charged that he had knowledge of "perjury," "political pressure" and the involvement of others in the Watergate bugging.

Dash and Thompson met with Judge Sirica and the three government prosecutors yesterday, apparently to discuss McCord's role in the ongoing investigations.

It is not known whether McCord will be given immunity from additional prosecution or a lighter sentence because of his cooperation.

Meanwhile, in U.S. District Court yesterday, Hunt appeared before the grand jury after Judge Sirica gave his permission to the government to call the former White House aide and the four Miami defendants who followed Hunt in pleading guilty to the charges against them last January.

Hunt testified for about an hour and 20 minutes, but neither his lawyers nor government prosecutors would comment on what questions he was asked or what his responses were.

On Monday, when convicted Watergate defendant G. Gordon Liddy testified and invoked the Fifth Amendment in response to 20 questions, Sirica was asked by the government to confer immunity from prosecution on Liddy and order him to testify.

No similar request was made by the government yesterday. Hunt is to resume his testimony this morning.

Hunt's lawyer, William O. Bittman, and principal Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl J. Silbert were both asked whether it would be necessary to give Hunt immunity from further prosecution to have him answer questions.

Each responded, "I don't know." Bittman, who was given a small room next to the grand jury room while Hunt testified, said Hunt conferred with him "two or three times" during the 80-minute session.

Although Bittman refused to discuss Hunt's testimony yesterday, the attorney said that Hunt's position is the same now as it was when he pleaded guilty on Jan. 11. Hunt told reporters then that if called to testify before the grand jury and asked if "higher-ups were involved" or if there was a wider conspiracy, "I would testify as following, gentleman, that to my personal knowledge there was not."

Austin Mittler, another lawyer for Hunt, also denied an assertion attributed to McCord in news reports that Hunt exerted pressure on the four Miami defendants to have them plead guilty and remain silent. Mittler said Hunt did not exert pressure on them and pressure was not put on Hunt to induce his plea.

Silbert, replying to published reports that McCord said he was never offered a lesser sentence by the prosecution in return for cooperating with the government, issued a three-page statement yesterday asserting that the government had twice attempted to bargain with McCord, and that McCord had rejected both attempts.

The first approach, on Oct. 25, was made through McCord's lawyers. If McCord would plead guilty before the Nov. 7 election and testify in open court about "all the persons involved in the so-called Watergate incident," the government would accept McCord's guilty plea to one count—conspiracy—dismissing the other seven counts against him, according to prosecution sources. Such an action would have reduced the maximum possible sentence from 45 years to five years.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Seymour Glanzer said the government wanted McCord's public testimony before the election "because there was intense public pressure to have it out before the election. We were sensitive to that."

Glanzer, apparently unimpressed with statements McCord has made to Senate investigators about others involved, said, "Obviously, when a person comes on belatedly like that, one has to question his credibility."

The second offer to McCord, according to Silbert, was made during the trial's first week. He said the prosecution offered to accept a plea to three of the eight counts against him—conspiracy, burglary and



illegal wiretapping—but told McRord the plea would have no effect on the government's recommendation for sentencing.

*Contributing to this article were Washington Post staff writers Carl Bernstein, Bob Woodward and Lawrence Meyer.*

### **Buckley Wants Truth On Watergate Case**

United Press International

Sen. James L. Buckley (Cons-R-N.Y.), one of President Nixon's strongest supporters in the Senate, said yesterday it was time to disclose the whole truth about the bugging of the Watergate headquarters of the Democratic Party.

"I don't think anything should be kept under the table," Buckley told a news conference. "I want to know what happened . . . The reports that

have come out indicate less than whole-hearted cooperation by the administration, yet that kind of effort was promised."

"We are coming to the moment of truth about Watergate and I hope we get that moment of truth," said the New York conservative. "If there is a crime involved, I would like to see it exposed."

The Associated Press reported yesterday that two Senate

Republican leaders, John Tower of Texas and Norris Cotton of New Hampshire, said they hope President Nixon will reverse himself and allow White House counsel John W. Dean III to testify before the Senate select committee investigating the Watergate.

Tower is chairman of the Senate GOP Policy Committee and Cotton is chairman of the Senate Republican Conference.